

# TRANSLATING RUSSIAN LITERATURE IN THE GLOBAL CONTEXT

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# Ukraine

## Translating Russian Literature in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine

*Lada Kolomiyets and Oleksandr Kalnychenko*

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[....] the Russians have been the first modern people to practice the political direction of culture consciously and to attack at every point the culture of any people whom they wish to dominate.

T. S. Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture*<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

This paper portrays Russian literature in Ukrainian translation from the early 1920s to the early 2020s. Our critical framework is Iurii Lotman's theory of cultural dialogue. As Lotman argues, "in a broad historical perspective, the interaction of cultures is always dialogical".<sup>2</sup> It enables a given receiving culture to take in the experience of other cultures, their literary forms, or philosophical, political, and scientific ideas; it incorporates the culture into international cultural and creative exchange, thereby helping it to advance. But sometimes, where cultural potential depends on the stronger influences of another culture, translation practices may hazardously destabilise the originality of a source

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- 1 T.S.Eliot, *Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), p. 93.
  - 2 Iurii Lotman, 'Problema vizantiiskogo vliianiia na russkuiu kul'turu v tipologicheskoi osveshchenii' ['The Issue of the Byzantine Empire's Impact on Russian Culture in the Typological Interpretation'], in *Izbrannye stat'i v trekh tomakh*, I (1992), *Stat'i po semiotike i tipologii kul'tury* [Selected Articles in Three Volumes: (I) Articles on the Semiotics and Typology of Culture] (Tallinn: Alexandra, 1992–93), pp. 121–28 (p. 122), [http://yanko.lib.ru/books/cultur/lotman-selection.htm#\\_Toc509600919](http://yanko.lib.ru/books/cultur/lotman-selection.htm#_Toc509600919).

culture's spiritual manifestations. All these features are clear in the dramatic collisions of the Ukrainian-Russian coexistence within the so-called 'shared cultural space'.<sup>3</sup>

Lotman's remark that "the dialogue of cultures is accompanied by the growing hostility of the recipient towards the one who dominates him"<sup>4</sup> helps us to puzzle out the complex relationship between Russian and Ukrainian cultures through translation. It enables us to understand why their dialogue has sometimes become strained, as it did in February 2014 after the Russian Federation annexed Crimea and began sponsoring a proxy war in Donbas, or broke down entirely, as from February 2022 with the expansion of Russia's war against Ukraine. To evaluate the current trends, it is enough to read the thoughts of leaders of public opinion in Ukraine, such as Oksana Zabuzhko, a popular Ukrainian novelist, essayist, and poet, who recently denounced all Russian classical literature as imperialist: "In many ways, it was Russian literature that wove the camouflage net for Russia's tanks".<sup>5</sup> According to Lotman, "an acute struggle for spiritual independence is an important typological feature".<sup>6</sup> Dialogue between Russian and Ukrainian cultures in the field of translation from and through Russian, as a mediating language, from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, was more like the slow but increasingly deadly compression of a rabbit by a boa constrictor. When in the post-Stalin era, this suffocating grasp partly relaxed, an entire school of translation emerged inflected against Russification. Its chief theorists included well-known translators of Russian prose such as Oleksa Kundzich, Stepan Kovhaniuk, and Maksym Rylsky, among others.

Considering translation "a deeply ambivalent concept and practice", Naoki Sakai pinpoints its functional duality ("translation always cuts both ways: at once a dynamism of domination and liberation, clarification and obfuscation, commerce and exploitation, concession and refusal to the 'other'").<sup>7</sup> This feature is particularly important to recall while surveying the inherently ambivalent role of translation in Russo-Ukrainian cultural dialogue. Sakai's inference that translation "can always be viewed to a larger or lesser degree

3 See, for example, Rostyslav Dotsenko, 'Pereklad—dlia samozbahachennia chy samoobkhradannia?' ['Translation: for Self-Enrichment or Self-Robbery?'], in Rostyslav Dotsenko, *Krytyka. Literaturoznavstvo. Vybrane [Criticism. Study of Literature. Selected]* (Ternopil: Bohdan, 2013), pp. 103–12.

4 Lotman, 'Problema vizantiiskogo vliianiia', p. 123.

5 Oksana Zabuzhko, 'No Guilty People in the World? Reading Russian Literature after the Bucha Massacre', *Times Literary Supplement*, 22 April 2022, <https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/russian-literature-bucha-massacre-essay-oksana-zabuzhko/>.

6 Lotman, 'Problema vizantiiskogo vliianiia', p. 123.

7 Naoki Sakai, 'The Modern Regime of Translation and Its Politics', in *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge. Sources, Concepts, Effects*, ed. by Lieven D'hulst and Yves Gambier (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2018), pp. 61–74 (p. 61).



as an ethico-political manoeuvre of social antagonism”<sup>8</sup> also works well with Russian-to-Ukrainian translation. As part of the historiographic description of Russian literature in Ukrainian translations, the authors of this article will examine reprints and retranslations alongside the first translated editions. Our study also incorporates translator biographies and their individual voices in paratexts. Our investigation of literary translators’ and editors’ self-concepts, their (multi)positionality, teloi, and goals, along with institutional attitudes and approaches, primarily draws on microhistorical methodology and terminology.<sup>9</sup>

Throughout our research, we refer to one of the key texts underlying this volume, Pascale Casanova’s 2004 monograph *The World Republic of Letters*, which represents the history of world literature as incessant struggle, competition, and rivalry.<sup>10</sup> Casanova’s important premise that literary value “circulates and is traded”<sup>11</sup> helps illuminate the ideology-based market and the shifting character of the Soviet canon of classical Russian and foreign literature. The processes of Soviet politicisation of the language of translation constitute an important aspect of our research. Having discerned in the politicisation of language “the ambiguity and paradox that govern the very enterprise of literature itself”, Casanova adds, “since language is not a purely literary tool, but an inescapably political instrument as well, it is through language that the literary world remains subject to political power”.<sup>12</sup> For postcolonial literary spaces (such as both Soviet and post-Soviet Ukrainian literature) she suggests “a more sophisticated model” of language that “would take into account a peculiar ambiguity of the relation of literary domination and dependence, namely, that writers in dominated spaces may be able to convert their dependence into an instrument of emancipation and legitimacy”.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in Casanova’s viewpoint, “literature itself, as a value common to an entire space, is not only part of the legacy of political domination but also an instrument that, once reappropriated, permits writers from literarily deprived territories to gain recognition”.<sup>14</sup>

Given the ambivalent role of the national writer and translator in colonial literature, it is crucial to ascertain the cultural positions from which translations of Russian-language literary works were carried out at different stages of the

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8 Ibid., pp. 61–62.

9 Our sources include *A History of Modern Translation Knowledge. Sources, Concepts, Effects*, ed. by Lieven D’hulst and Yves Gambier (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2018); *What is Translation History? A Trust-Based Approach*, ed. by Andrea Rizzi, Birgit Lang, and Anthony Pym (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019); *Literary Translator Studies*, ed. by Klaus Kaindl, Waltraud Kolb, and Daniela Schlager (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins, 2021).

10 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M. B. De Bevoise (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2004).

11 Ibid., p. 13.

12 Ibid., p. 115.

13 Ibid., p. 116.

14 Ibid.

USSR and after it. In this regard, an important concept for our research is that of the national writer, discussed by Casanova,<sup>15</sup> the meaning of which we specify for the context of Ukrainian literature and extend to literary translation, using the term 'writer-translator'. Defined by Casanova as "conventional" and "outmoded" in the literary models he reproduces, a national writer finds himself relegated "to political dependence, aesthetic backwardness, and academicism" by anti-national writers who reverse the polarity of the space, as it were, by belonging to autonomous literary (sub)spaces.<sup>16</sup> Anti-national writer-translators appeared in the Ukrainian literary field only in the late 1980s (the iconic figure is Iurii Andrukhovych), and in Ukrainian émigré literature in the West twenty years earlier (like Ihor Kostetsky).

The traditional self-identification of Ukrainian translators as *national writers*, united by the idea of literature and translation as a nation-building function, provides a national framework for the study of translations, particularly those from Russian (as a closely related language) and, in general, for the scrutiny of selections in the repertoire of translated literature in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> Ukrainian writer-translators of the Soviet period faced political repression, persecution for "nationalism", accusations of "nationalistic wrecking in translation",<sup>18</sup> arrests and executions, while their translations were either destroyed or ruthlessly edited linguistically and ideologically, and many of them even several times. The method of genetic criticism,<sup>19</sup> applied, for instance, to edited reprints and retranslations of Nikolai Gogol's works, demonstrates the gradual approximation of the formal lexical and structural texture of the originals during the period from the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s. This trend covers even the early works of Gogol, from his so-called 'Ukrainian cycle', where this shift towards literality becomes particularly noticeable and devastating in aesthetic and stylistic terms. When their own life, or at least freedom, was at stake in Stalinist times, Soviet writer-translators often publicly criticised the work of their contemporaries or nearest predecessors, praising their own or somebody else's subsequent retranslations and trying to adapt to ideological slogans that

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15 "The national writer has a national career and a national market: he reproduces in the language of his nation models that are not only the most conventional but also the most consistent with commercial—which is to say national, universally outmoded criteria", *ibid.*, p. 279.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

17 Maksym Strikha, *Ukraïns'kyi khudozhnii pereklad: Mizh literaturoiu i natsiietvorenniam [Ukrainian Literary Translation: Between Literature and Nation-Making]* (Kyiv: Fakt/Nash Chas, 2006).

18 This term meant the distancing of the Ukrainian language from Russian at the grammatical, lexical and syntactic levels; 'wrecking' in translation was equated to 'wrecking' in any other sphere of Stalin's national economy; 'the wreckers' were blamed for all the small and big troubles and failures in Soviet industry, collective farming, education, and even communal services.

19 A detailed comparison of successive versions of a text. See *What Is Translation History?*, ed. by Rizzi et al., esp. the glossary on pp. 113–16.

were imposed by the Kremlin. Under the circumstances, psychological factors, apart from socio-political stimuli and ideological reasons, played an important role in the evaluation and editing of translations at that time. Purely aesthetic motives came last on the agenda if they did not disappear completely.<sup>20</sup>

It is important to remember that Ukrainian culture itself has been toxic to its natives both in the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, and that translations into Ukrainian bore constant danger for their creators. As Vitaly Chernetsky has concisely outlined:

The implication for local Ukrainian culture, during both the tsarist and the Soviet period, was 'a syndrome of dependence and derivativeness', according to which the best and the brightest were either coerced or encouraged to shed attachments to Ukraine. [...] Often, especially during the years of Stalinist terror, such flights from Ukraine and distancing from Ukrainian culture by members of the Ukrainian intelligentsia were essentially attempts (often unsuccessful) at physical survival.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, our study will also address the psychology of the translators' social behaviour in terms of their attitude to predecessors, competitors, and rivals, especially in a repressive social system. Following Rakefet Sela-Sheffy, we supplement the study of the translators' "personae" with our research on their editors and reviewers, while observing how translators treat their competitors in a stressful social situation complicated by state-imposed terror.<sup>22</sup> While seemingly seeking to gain the upper hand and eliminate their rivals by hurrying to expose so-called 'wrecking' translations, translators in Soviet Ukraine in the majority of cases were actually trying to defend their own lives and the lives of their families by criticising their fellow translators' work. We believe that the translators' non-linear and seemingly paradoxical psycho-behavioural reactions to the direct challenges and threats of the totalitarian Soviet system are an important part of Ukraine's microhistory of translation, along with objective (and in many cases tragic) biographical data. The microhistorical scale of a particular psychological state, action, or event may seem insignificant, and individual circumstances inconspicuous against the broad background of mass processes across the state, but a holistic view of translation history, as of any generalised history, is based on microhistorical elements.

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20 In particular, a group of young researchers of literature, mostly members of Pylypenko's Literary Association, whose journal was known as *Plough*, were also arrested (accused of belonging to a counterrevolutionary organisation) and executed in December 1934.

21 Vitaly Chernetsky, 'Russophone Writing in Ukraine: Historical Contexts and Post-Euromaidan Changes', in *Global Russian Cultures*, ed. by Kevin F. Platt (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019), pp. 48–68 (p. 56, p. 57).

22 Rakefet Sela-Sheffy, 'The Translators' Personae: Marketing Translatorial Images as Pursuit of Capital', *Meta*, 53:3 (2008), 609–22.

## Literary Translations from Russian in the 1920s and 1930s

As early as 1930, the literary critic Elizaveta Starynkevych, in a Russian-language review of books translated into Ukrainian in 1929–30, argued that in comparison with the pace of translation of canonical Western authors, the rate of translating Russian masterworks was unsatisfactory because many big names in the genres of prose and drama were still waiting for Ukrainian publishers to fill the gap.<sup>23</sup> From the early 1930s, this gap was quickly filled.<sup>24</sup> By the late 1930s, the Ukrainian dynamics for publishing translated books revealed a significant predominance of Russian and Russian-language literature. This tendency is better understood if we adapt Casanova's concept of soft power as domination over other nations' literatures.

The critics and editors of that time paid special attention to stylistic peculiarities of translating canonical Russian authors of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with Ukrainian backgrounds and/or whose writings were stylistically close to Ukrainian linguistic patterns or topics. First and foremost, among them were Gogol, Anton Chekhov, and Nikolai Leskov, whose works contain significant Ukrainian elements, both stylistic and thematic. A literary critic of the early Soviet period, Volodymyr Derzhavyn singled out these authors as belonging to both Russian and Ukrainian literature. Gogol was the most frequently translated author, although Pushkin—the number one classic in the official canon of Russian literature in the USSR—outstripped him by the number of separate publications. Various works by Gogol appeared in separate Ukrainian editions each year from 1926 to 1937. Works translated in the early 1920s were re-translated during this period. In the 1930s, several separate publications appeared each year. More than two dozen translators, including prominent writers and skilled stylists, were involved in the Gogol (known in Ukrainian as Mykola Hohol') translation 'industry'. In commemoration of Gogol's *Evenings on a Farm near Dikanka* (*Vechera na khutore bliz Dikan'ki*, 1829–32), the Ukrainian publishing house Knyhospilka scheduled the first five-volume Ukrainian collection of Gogol's works (*Tvory*) to appear between 1929 and 1932. The team of translators included recognised authors, Rylsky and Mykola Zerov

23 Elizaveta Starynkevych, 'Problemy i dostizheniia v iskusstve perevoda. (K itogam ukrainskoi perevodnoi literatury za 1929–1930 gg.)' ['Problems and Achievements in the Art of Translation. (Towards the Results of Ukrainian Translated Literature in 1929–1930)'], *Krasnoe slovo*, 3 (1930), 111–18.

24 From the 1850s onwards, both anthologies and individual Russian classics in Ukrainian translation were also published in Western Ukraine (Lviv and Kolomyia); Russian poetry and fiction appeared in Western Ukrainian periodicals as well.



among them. However, only three of the planned five books emerged—the first, second, and fourth volumes.

Chekhov's short story 'Kashtanka' was first published in Ukrainian translation in 1923, in a version by Serhiy Efremov (reprinted in 1928 and 1929). Efremov was a principal figure in the Ukrainian Academy of Science at the time.<sup>25</sup> Knyhospilka's publication in 1929–30 of Chekhov's *Selected Works* (*Vybrani tvory*)<sup>26</sup> under Vasyl Ivanushkin's and Rylsky's editorship became an outstanding event in Ukrainian Chekhoviana.<sup>27</sup> In 1930, a volume of Chekhov's *Comedies* (*Komedii*) appeared from Ukraine's State Publishing House (Derzhavne Vydavnytstvo Ukrainy, abbreviated as DVU), as well as several other editions of Chekhov's stories in various translations. The 1935 edition of Chekhov's *Short Stories* (*Opovidannia*), edited by Zinaida Yoffe, did not credit its translators. By the time the extended 1937 edition of *Short Stories* appeared, Yoffe herself, wife of the executed linguist and translator Borys Tkachenko, had been sentenced to five years in a labour camp. Hence this expanded edition mentioned neither its editor nor any translators.

Prose works from classical Russian literature began to be translated extensively in the 1930s. Tolstoy's prose appeared first from various publishing houses, in particular, *Khadzhi Murat* (written c. 1904) from DVU in 1924; *Childhood, Boyhood, and Youth* (*Detstvo. otrochestvo. iunost'*, 1852–56) from Knyhospilka (*Dytynstvo, khlop'iats'tvo i yunatstvo*) and *The Cossacks* (*Kazaki*, 1863) by Rukh publishing house (*Kozaky*), both in 1930. From the mid-1930s onwards, the State Publishing House of the Ukrainian SSR (UkrSSR) monopolised all subsequent publications, producing the first book of *Anna Karenina* (1878) in a translation by the well-regarded writer, poet, and editor, Oleksiy Varavva (1935). This was followed by various short stories ('A Landlord's Morning' [*'Utro pomeshchika'*] and 'Master and Man' [*'Khoziai i rabotnik'*]), all of *War and Peace* (*Voina i mir*, 1869) (*Viina i myr*), and the *Sevastopol Sketches* (*Sevastopol'skie rasskazy*, 1856) (*Sevastopolski opovidannia*) in the late 1930s, translated by the eminent journalist and editor Antin Kharchenko.<sup>28</sup> Ivan Turgenev's works were also widely (re) translated. For example, his cycle of short stories *A Sportsman's Sketches* (*Zapiski okhotnika*, 1852) was published in 1924, 1930, and 1935 (*Zapysky myslivtsia*) by several publishing houses and in different translations, often without mentioning the translator(s).<sup>29</sup>

25 After Efremov's arrest in 1930 (he was sentenced to ten years in prison, dying in captivity in 1939), 'Kashtanka' was re-translated by Borys Tkachenko and published together with the short story 'Van'ka' in 1935.

26 This was intended as a three-volume collection: but, similarly to the truncated collection of Gogol's *Works* [*Tvory*] planned by the same publisher, only two of three projected volumes were produced.

27 Tragically, Ivanushkin was shot dead on 13 July 1937.

28 That very year, 1936, Kharchenko was arrested.

29 Ukrainian editions of Turgenev's *Selected Works* [*Vybrani tvory*] appeared in 1935 and 1937. Further separate editions in Ukrainian of the works by Turgenev

In 1936, crucial works from the Soviet canon of classical Russian literature appeared in Ukrainian: Nikolai Chernyshevsky's novel *What is to be Done?* (*Chto delat'?*, 1863) (*Shcho robyty?*), Aleksandr Griboedov's comedy *Woe from Wit* (*Gore ot uma*, written 1823) (*Hore z rozumu*), and Ivan Goncharov's *Oblomov* (1859). Aleksandr Ostrovsky's plays were printed in 1936 in Kharchenko's translation, and Mikhail Saltykov-Shchedrin was also well-represented by successive translations of his major works: *The History of a Town* (*Istoriia odnogo goroda*, 1870 [*Istoriia odnogo mista*, translated 1930]), *A Tale of How One Man Fed Two Generals* (*Povest' o tom, kak odin muzhik dvukh generalov prokormil*, 1869 [*Povist pro te, yak odyin muzhyk dvokh heneraliv prokormyv*, 1938]), and the novel *The Golovlev Family* (*Gospoda Golovlevy*, 1880) (*Pany Holovliovy*, 1939).

## A Zone of Permanent Political Turbulence: Soviet Russian Prose and Dramatic Works in Translation

The most popular Soviet author was Maksim Gorky, whose novel *Mother* (*Mat'*, 1906/1922), translated by Varavva and edited by Serhiy Pylypenko, was first published in Ukrainian translation (*Maty*) in 1928. *My Universities* (*Moi universitety*, 1923; *Moï universytety*), translated by Mykhailo Lebedynets under the editorship of Pylypenko, also appeared that year. It was retranslated by Maria Pylinska and Ivan Dniprovsky in 1933, with only Pylinska named as translator when the translation was republished by the same publisher in the following year.<sup>30</sup> 1928 also saw the publication of Gorky's *Foma Gordeev* (1899), translated by Lizaveta Kardynalovska (sister of Pylypenko's wife, Tetiana Kardynalovska) and reprinted in 1935. Gorky had opposed the translation of his works into Ukrainian, considering it a "Little Russian" rather than a fully-fledged language. Gorky's imperialist prejudice is clear from his 1927 letter to Oleksa Slisarenko, editor-in-chief of the Knyhospilka publishing cooperative, declining permission to translate his novel *Mother* into Ukrainian and thrice referring to that language as a "narechie" (dialect).<sup>31</sup> However, Slisarenko eventually managed to persuade Gorky to agree to the translation.

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appeared in different translations and publishing houses, e.g., the short story 'Mumu' (1852) in 1928 and twice in 1934, the novel *Fathers and Sons* [*Ottsy i deti*, 1862] in 1929 and 1935 [*Bat'ky i dity*], the novel *Rudin* (1855) in 1935 and 1937. 'Bezhin Meadow' ['Bezhin Lug'] was published in 1930 under the editorship of Rylsky ['Bizhyn Luh']. The novels *Home of the Gentry* [*Dvorianskoe gnezdo*, 1858], published in 1936 [*Dvoriants'ke hnizdo*], and *On the Eve* [*Nakanune*, 1860], published in 1936 [*Naperedodni*], reprint 1937, were translated by Volodymyr Svidzinsky.

30 From 1934 to 1956, the writings of Dniprovsky, who was Pylinska's husband, were banned, as was any mention of his name.

31 Maksym Strikha, *Ukraïns'kyi khudozhnii pereklad: Mizh literaturoiu i natsiietvorenniam*, pp. 208–09.

Gorky's main argument against translating into Ukrainian was that an average Ukrainian reader can read any work of Russian literature in the original. His personal conviction contradicted the general policy of the ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which aimed at indigenisation, and in the case of Ukraine, Ukrainisation: the use of the Ukrainian language in education, culture, literature, science, and office work in order to establish Soviet ideological slogans in Ukrainian mass culture. By way of a counterargument to Gorky's reasoning, we cite a 1928 article by N. Gavrashenko (this is most likely a pseudonym). It appeared in the Russian-language literary and art journal of the All-Ukrainian Union of Proletarian Writers, *Red Word* (*Krasnoe slovo*). This article justified the need for Ukrainian translations of Gorky and other Russian writers thus:

It is true, of course, that the Ukrainian reader can read any work of Russian literature in the original. But it also matters for the ordinary reader's perception whether this work, in terms of its intimacy, greater proximity, and hence effectiveness, is being perceived in Russian, which sounds foreign, or in the intimately close and native Ukrainian language.<sup>32</sup>

In the late 1920s, *Krasnoe slovo*, where Gavrashenko's article had appeared, served as a propaganda platform for promoting the idea of Ukrainian translations of Russian literature. In 1929, it published a review article, 'Translated Literature in Ukraine', by the philologist Oleksandr Biletskii. The author of the article argued that the main priority when commissioning translations for a Ukrainian readership was to offer as many translations into Ukrainian as possible—both from Russian and direct translations from other foreign languages—to develop a Ukrainian canon of world literature. Moreover, Biletskii compared reading world literature in Russian rather than Ukrainian translation to consuming a surrogate that "upsets the natural growth and development of thought, which is [...] inseparable from words, is being formed by words".<sup>33</sup> The critic Derzhavyn had also called for the formation of a Ukrainian canon of world literature. Arguments in favour of Ukrainian translations from Russian prevailed and Gorky's works continued to be published in abundance.<sup>34</sup> From 1928 to 1966,

32 N. Gavrashenko, 'Maksim Gorky v ukrainskikh perevodakh' ['Maksim Gorky in Ukrainian Translations'], *Krasnoe slovo*, 5 (1928), 151–53 (p. 152).

33 Aleksandr Beletskii, 'Perevodnaia literatura na Ukraine' ['Translated Literature in Ukraine'], *Krasnoe Slovo*, 2 (1929), 87–96. Reprint in Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Yuliana Poliakova *Ukrains'ka perekladoznavcha dumka 1920-kh–pochatku 1930-kh rokiv: Khrestomatiia vybranykh prats' z perekladознавства до курсу 'Istoriia perekladu'*, pp. 376–91 (p. 386). All translations of quotations from the Russian and Ukrainian languages throughout this chapter are by Lada Kolomiyets, unless otherwise indicated.

34 For more details see Lada Kolomiyets, *Ukrains'kyi khudozhnii pereklad ta perekladachi 1920–30-kh rokiv: Materialy do kursu 'Istoriia perekladu'* [Ukrainian Literary Translation and Translators in the 1920s–1930s: Materials for the Course 'History of Translation'] (Vinnytsia: Nova Knyha, 2015), p. 41.

his writings in Ukrainian translation totalled 186; Chekhov, for comparison, had eighty-three; Gogol, seventy-seven; Tolstoy, seventy-six; Turgenev, thirty-nine; and Lermontov, thirteen.<sup>35</sup>

The Ukrainian language proved capable of meeting the demands placed on it by the subject matter and style of the translated works; the expenditure of effort and money on translating Russian canonical writings fully justified itself. The rapid appearance of numerous translations became a living refutation of the idea of the uselessness and futility of translations from Russian into Ukrainian, and the business of Russian-to-Ukrainian translation developed relatively smoothly until 1934. That summer, a conference of translators and editors of Gorky's works was held at the Central Committee of the Ukrainian Communist Party. Subsequently, the Ukrainian-language *Literary Newspaper* (*Literaturna hazeta*) published an article which severely criticised recent translations of Gorky's works into Ukrainian, accusing them of deliberately avoiding homophones common to Russian and Ukrainian.<sup>36</sup> It announced that Gorky's books would be retranslated using a different, more literal strategy. This rapprochement with the Russian language extended to translations of other authors, for instance, including those of the Socialist Realist author Mikhail Sholokhov.<sup>37</sup> In the spirit of combatting "nationalistic wrecking", a devastating critique of Pylypenko's translation of Sholokhov's *Virgin Soil Uplturned* (*Podniataia tselina*, 1932) appeared in *Literary Newspaper* on 20 August 1934,<sup>38</sup> four months after Pylypenko was executed on 3 March (he had been arrested on 29 November 1933, accused of "distorting national policy, ideological instability and conciliatory attitude towards bourgeois-nationalist elements").<sup>39</sup> Whether

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- 35 *Presa Ukraïns'koi RSR, 1917–1966: stat. dovidnyk* [*The Press of the Ukrainian SSR, 1917–1966: Statistical Reference Book*] ed. by Mykola A. Nyzovy, Maria I. Brezghunova, and Yuri B. Medvedev (Kharkiv, n.p., 1967), pp. 72–73.
- 36 Andriy Paniv, 'Tvory O.M. Gorkoho ukraïns'koiu movoiu: Pro potrebu novykh perekladiv, vilnykh vid "natsionalistychnykh" perekruchen' ['O.M. Gorky's Works in Ukrainian: On the Exigency of Retranslations Free from "Nationalistic" Distortions'], *Literaturna hazeta*, 12 August 1934, p. 1. For more details see Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Nataliia Kalnychenko, 'Campaigning against the "Nationalistic Wrecking" in Translation in Ukraine in the Mid-1930s', in *Translation and Power*, ed. by Lucyna Harmon and Dorota Osuchowska (Berlin: Peter Lang, 2020), pp. 53–60.
- 37 For a further example of destructive editorial journalism, see Oleksandr Kalnychenko and Lada Kolomiyets, 'Translation in Ukraine during the Stalinist Period: Literary Translation Policies and Practices' in *Translation under Communism*, ed. by Christopher Rundle, Anna Lange, and Daniele Monticelli (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2022), pp. 141–72 (p. 158), [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79664-8\\_6](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-79664-8_6).
- 38 Yevhen Kasianenko, 'Yak Pylypenko perekruchuvav Sholokhova' ['How Pylypenko Distorted Sholokhov'], *Literaturna hazeta*, 20 August 1934, p. 2.
- 39 Tetiana Yelisieva, 'Ukraïnskyi literator na tliadianskoi doby', in *Reabilitovani istoriiei. Kharkivska oblast* (Kyiv; Kharkiv: Red.-vydav. hrupa Kharkiv. tomu ser. 'Reabilitovani istoriiei', 2008. Book. 1, Part. 2), pp. 111–19 (p. 118).

or not the author of the article, Yevhen Kasianenko,<sup>40</sup> knew at the time of writing that Pylypenko was no longer alive, remains unclear.<sup>41</sup> Shortly before his arrest, Pylypenko had submitted his translation of *Virgin Soil Uplturned* in manuscript to the Literature and Art publishing house, then part of the State Publishing Association of Ukraine (Derzhavne vydavnyche ob'iednannia Ukraïny, DVOU). However, in March 1934 DVOU was liquidated, and its constituent publishers were reorganised in order to subordinate them more closely to the relevant people's commissariats (the Literature and Art publishing house was thus subordinated to the People's Commissariat of Education of the Ukrainian SSR). A well-known writer, translator, scientist, editor, and a member of the Bolshevik Communist Party since 1919, Pylypenko sat on the editorial board of the DVOU. Therefore, after his arrest and the reorganisation of the DVOU, all the members of the Literature and Art editorial board were exposed. At that time, the other well-known translator, journalist, and editor, Kasianenko, was working with this publishing house. It is likely that the editorial board of Literature and Art deliberately asked Kasianenko for a devastating review of Pylypenko's translation to pre-empt further repression. Prior to Pylypenko's arrest, Kasianenko had collaborated with him as a co-editor of the former's journal *Plough (Pluh)*; the two men were certainly not ideologically opposed. Yet Kasianenko re-translated Sholokhov's highly popular Soviet novel *Virgin Soil Uplturned*, which he eventually published in Literature and Art in 1934 (*Pidniata tsilyna*), when the publishing house withdrew Pylypenko's previously submitted translation.

This dramatic story shows how tightly intertwined personal motives and psychological attitudes were with allegedly political decisions and actions, particularly when the translator's ego turns out to be the main trigger of political accusations of one's literary predecessors and rivals. Even assuming that Kasianenko knew about Pylypenko's execution before publishing his denunciatory article, he did not seem concerned about how his defamatory remarks would affect the lives of Pylypenko's family and followers. The publishing microhistory of Ukrainian translations of Sholokhov's works, which includes paratexts and biographical data about translators, is very revealing for the whole process of Russian-to-Ukrainian Soviet translation. Sholokhov's

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40 Yevhen Kasianenko (1889–1937) was a Ukrainian public and political activist, aircraft designer, journalist, translator, and a prominent literary editor. He was arrested on 11 July 1937 and executed on 31 December 1937 by the verdict of the military commission of the Supreme Court of the USSR. See Mykhailo Zhurovsky, 'Braty Kasianenky: polit kriz' morok chasu' ['The Kasianenko brothers: A Flight through the Darkness of Time'], *Kyivs'kyi politekhnich*, 1–4 (2011), <https://kpi.ua/kasianenko>.

41 Kasianenko and Pylypenko lived next door, in the same Slovo Building which accommodated Ukrainian writers and poets, in Kharkiv; Kasianenko's family resided in apartment 18, while Pylypenko's family occupied apartment 20.



epic novel in four volumes *And Quiet Flows the Don* (*Tikhii Don*),<sup>42</sup> translated by Semen Kats and edited by Yevhen Pluzhnyk (*Tykhyyi Din*), was printed in two editions by Literature and Art—first in 1931 (books 1 and 2) and later, between 1932 and 1934 (books 1, 2, and 3). In 1935 all three books of the novel (in the same translation) reappeared in print from the State Publishing House of the UkrSSR.<sup>43</sup> After the Soviet authorities stopped trusting Kasianenko, the novel *Virgin Soil Uplturned* appeared in a new translation by Stepan Kovhaniuk (*Pidniata tsilyna*, 1935). Kasianenko was arrested on 11 July 1937 (and executed on 31 December of the same year).

## Translations of Russian Literature from World War II to the Collapse of the USSR

Only a few Ukrainian writer-translators from Russian survived Stalin's purges and remained active: Rylsky, Tychyna, Mykola Bazhan, Mykola Tereshchenko, Leonid Pervomaiskyi, Natalia Zabyla, besides Volodymyr Sosiura, Andriy Holovko, Iurii Ianovskyi, Andriy Malyshko, and some others. However, translations from Russian increased rapidly. From 1946 to 1955, translations into Ukrainian totalled 310 volumes of Russian pre-Soviet classics and 413 books by modern Russian writers.<sup>44</sup> Ukrainian publishing houses printed translations of prose works by 180 Russian authors in the postwar period, including twenty-eight classics. The total circulation of these translations was about 25 million copies.<sup>45</sup>

Stepan Kovhaniuk estimates that in the mid-1950s, fifty-eight people translated Russian classics, including thirty writers and twenty-eight professional translators. This group can be further narrowed to about thirty writers and professional translators who were engaged in translation constantly, with at least a dozen translations to their credit.<sup>46</sup> Of those thirty writers, Kovhaniuk names only five leading translators: Rylsky, Tychyna, Mykhailo

42 The first three volumes were written from 1925 to 1932 and published in the magazine *Oktyabr* in 1928–32, and the fourth volume was finished in 1940 and published in the magazine *Novy mir* in 1937–40.

43 Book 4 of *And Quiet Flows the Don*, translated by Stepan Kovhaniuk [*Tykhyyi Don*], appeared in print in 1941 from the State Publishing House of the UkrSSR.

44 Oleksa Kundzich, 'Stan khudozhnioho perekladu na Ukraïni' ['The State of Literary Translation in Ukraine'] in *Pytannia perekladu: z materialiv respublikans'koi narady perekladachiv* (liutyi 1956) [*Issues of Translations: Proceedings of the All-Ukrainian Meeting of Translators* (February 1956)] (Kyiv: Derzhlitvydav, 1957), pp. 5–54 (p. 6).

45 Stepan Kovhaniuk, 'Pereklad khudozhnioi rosiis'koi prozy na ukraïns'ku movu' in *Pytannia perekladu: z materialiv respublikans'koi narady perekladachiv* (liutyi 1956) (Kyiv: Derzhlitvydav, 1957), pp. 55–75 (pp. 55–56).

46 Ibid., p. 56.

Stelmakh, Kundzich, and Holovko.<sup>47</sup> Having defined a “perfect translation” as “a translation when the reader forgets about the translator and does not see him in the text”, Kovhaniuk points to Rytsky, whose translations “could be unconditionally called perfect and exemplary in this respect”. He specifically refers to Rytsky’s Gogol translations, ‘May Night, or the Drowned Maiden’ (‘Maiskaia noch’ ili utoplennitsa’, 1831; ‘Mais’ka nich, abo Utoplena’, 1929) and ‘The Tale of How Ivan Ivanovich Quarrelled with Ivan Nikiforovich’<sup>48</sup> (‘Povest’ o tom, kak possorilsia Ivan Ivanovich s Ivanom Nikiforovichem’, 1835; ‘Povist’ pro te, iak posvaryvsia Ivan Ivanovych z Ivanom Nykyforovychem’, 1930).<sup>49</sup> Thus, the translator’s invisibility is guaranteed, in Kovhaniuk’s view, by the fluency of the “cultivated” translating language (in Berman’s terms).<sup>50</sup>

Among new translations, which fall short of ‘exemplary’ status, Kovhaniuk mentions Stelmakh’s and Holovko’s 1954 translations of Pushkin’s *The Tales of the Late Ivan Petrovich Belkin* (*Povesti pokoinogo Ivana Petrovicha Belkina*, 1831; *Povisti pokoiinoho Ivana Petrovycha Bielkina*) and ‘Roslavlev’ (1831) respectively, Ostap Vyshnia’s 1952 version of Gogol’s *The Inspector General* (*Revizor*, 1836), Kundzich’s 1951 version of Lermontov’s *A Hero of Our Time* (*Geroi nashego vremeni*, 1841; *Heroi nashoho chasu*), and Maria Rudynska’s 1954 translation of Chekhov’s ‘The Grasshopper’ (‘Poprygun’ia’, 1891) (‘Vitrohonka’).<sup>51</sup> On the one hand, by the mid-1950s, “Ukrainian writers had already made all the best works of Russian artistic and philosophical thought the spiritual heritage of the Ukrainian people”, as Kundzich, both a practitioner and theoretician of Russian-to-Ukrainian translation, summarises.<sup>52</sup> However, the problem of insufficient quality of most postwar translations arose in the mid-1950s. The ban on translations published during the 1920s and early 1930s (this period went down in history as the decade of Ukrainian national revival) gave rise to the appearance on a massive scale from the mid-1930s of the so-called “edited translations”, while the names of translators who were arrested and executed completely disappeared from printed editions, as if they had never existed. A repressed person’s translations underwent ruthless and repeated editing and had to be published without the translator’s name—only with the label “translation edited by such and such”, or even with an abbreviated version of the label: “edited translation”.

The role of literary editor was reduced to transforming the Ukrainian literary language into a pale shadow of the Russian language:

47 Ibid., p. 57.

48 Also known in English as ‘The Squabble’.

49 Kovhaniuk, ‘Pereklad khudozhnioi rosiis’koï prozy’, p. 58.

50 Antoine Berman, ‘Translation and the Trials of the Foreign’ (1985), trans. by Lawrence Venuti, in *The Translation Studies Reader*, ed. by Lawrence Venuti, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 276–89.

51 Kovhaniuk, ‘Pereklad khudozhnioi rosiis’koï prozy’, p. 60.

52 Kundzich, ‘Stan khudozhnioho perekladu na Ukraïni’, p. 27.

If you take a closer look at the translations of 1946–1950, you can see that they are ALL [*original capitals*—L.K.] marked by the heavy seal of all-binding literalism. It was, so to speak, a sign of the time, a period of editorial arbitrariness, when the translator sometimes could not recognize his translation after the book was published. The editor's pen would mercilessly and consistently cross out any living word that 'deviated from the original', i.e., was not a calque.<sup>53</sup>

Kovhaniuk, whose corrected complete translation of Sholokhov's novel *And Quiet Flows the Don* in four volumes appeared in 1955 (and was reprinted in 1961), experienced this editorial insistence on literalism. As a speaker at a formal meeting of Ukrainian translators in Kyiv on 16 February 1956, Kovhaniuk focused his speech 'The Translation of Russian Literary Prose into the Ukrainian Language' ('Pereklad khudozhnioi rosiis'koï prozy na ukraïns'ku movu') around the painful and urgent issue of literalism in translations from or via Russian. This critic-translator called the literalist strategy "a depressing copyism", "a gramophone that will never replace a living voice", and "the most dangerous enemy of translated literature" that bears "the stillborn fruit".<sup>54</sup> In his keynote speech 'The State of Literary Translation in Ukraine' ('Stan khudozhnioho perekladu na Ukraïni') at the same meeting, Kundzich denounced literal translations from Russian and their disastrous impact on the Ukrainian literary language.<sup>55</sup> Kundzich labelled the literalist strategy as "slavish copying", "the spoilage of literary language", and "a clerical style" (as opposed to artistic literary style).<sup>56</sup> The danger of such a strategy, displayed in the multi-volume editions of Russian classics and the hundreds of works of Soviet literature, was that it exerted great influence on the Ukrainian literary language. As Kundzich maintained, the language of translations had overwhelmed Ukrainian literary language.<sup>57</sup> Through mass publications of these translations, despite their impoverished and monotonous lexis severed from the vital source of folk speech, the artificial translation style was replacing native Ukrainian literary style.

However, concerted opposition by Ukrainian translators (Kovhaniuk, Kundzich, Borys Ten, and others) to slavish literalism in translations from Russian stimulated Rylsky to develop a theory of translation. In his article 'Problems of Literary Translation' ('Problemy khudozhn'oho perekladu'), first circulated in 1954 and later included in Rylsky's 1975 volume *The Art of*

53 Kovhaniuk, 'Pereklad khudozhnioi rosiis'koï prozy', p. 60.

54 Ibid., pp. 61, 62, 63.

55 This meeting took place just a week before Nikita Khrushchev's secret report, vilifying Stalin, 'On the Cult of Personality and Its Consequences', was made at the Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party (25 February 1956).

56 Kundzich, 'Stan khudozhnioho perekladu na Ukraïni', p. 8, p. 10.

57 Ibid., p. 5.

*Translation (Mystetstvo perekladu)*, the author attempted to break free from the dictates of literalism with the help of this theory.<sup>58</sup> The writer-translator warned against calquing from a closely-related language (read: from Russian) because of the threat of misusing words similar in sound but different in meaning, and of the interlingual homonyms that trip up translators. While denouncing extremely literal translation, Rylsky simultaneously warned against its opposite, the temptation to excessively domesticate (here, Ukrainianise) foreign-language texts.<sup>59</sup> Rylsky's resilient opposition to the unofficial literal norm of translating from Russian was organised into a clear list of the main threats and difficulties awaiting the translator, namely: (1) noun gender, rarely identical in the Russian and Ukrainian languages; (2) false friends, or interlingual homonyms; (3) the danger of either subordinating the native language to a foreign-language structure, or, conversely, over-identifying the target language in specifically national colouring; (4) discrepancies between life depicted in the original and in the target culture; and (5) foreign-language borrowings in the original text.<sup>60</sup>

Through the Russian language and translations from Russian (in Ukraine and other Soviet Republics), a Soviet cultural space was established, which proved to be deliberately isolated from the world cultural space and which was intended to supplant the latter. We recall Casanova's comment on the danger of omitting translations of world literature from closed literary spaces, which seems relevant for translations in the USSR at that time: "By contrast with autonomous literary worlds, the most closed literary spaces are characterized by an absence of translation and, as a result, an ignorance of recent innovations in international literature and of the criteria of literary modernity".<sup>61</sup> Thus, the period of late Stalinism (from the mid-1930s to mid-1950s) witnessed a decline in Ukrainian translation tradition, characterised by multiple retranslations and revisions of previously published works as well as the mass phenomenon of indirect translation via Russian mediation. After the campaign against "translator-wreckers", as Ukrainian scholar and translator Maksym Strikha maintains, publishers began to shun those translators active during the first Soviet decades. From 1937, these disappeared from publishing houses.

The translators of the new conscription who came to replace those executed or exiled to the GULAG camps were often individuals of much lower culture and professionalism, who had no command of foreign languages other than Russian. Moreover, the translations published in the UkrSSR since the late 1930s mainly belonged to the Russian and partly European classics (but only to those authors who were considered 'progressive') as well as 'the fraternal

58 Maksym Rylsky, 'Problemy khudozhn'oho perekladu' ['Problems of Artistic Translation'], in *Mystetstvo perekladu* [*The Art of Translation*], ed. by Maksym Rylsky (Kyiv: Radians'kyi pys'mennyk, 1975), pp. 25–92.

59 Ibid., pp. 51–52.

60 Ibid., p. 56, p. 57, pp. 58–59, p. 63.

61 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 107.

literatures of the peoples of the USSR' (later also the literatures of 'people's democracies', of 'Socialist camp', and of 'peoples struggling for liberation from colonial oppression'). However, those translations of European classics and the literature of the peoples of the USSR were already carried out from Russian translations.<sup>62</sup>

On the eve of World War II, a notorious 'translationese' began to develop, flourishing in the first postwar decade. This was when Russian classics were most widely published. The mass-produced Ukrainian-language editions of Chekhov (1949), Leskov (1950), Lermontov (1951), Gogol in three volumes (1952), Pushkin in four volumes (1953), and Chekhov in three volumes (1954) are a good case in point. Chekhov's 1949 volume did not name any translators. Gogol's three volumes contained several translations (unrecognisably distorted) by repressed translators whose identities were disguised under circumlocutions such as "translation edited by I. Senchenko" or "translation edited by P. Panch", which only named the most recent editor. Translations included in these volumes were subject to linguistic revision characterised by editors' efforts to eliminate so-called "archaisms" (references to national history), and to purify the Ukrainian language from European elements not found in Russian, which should be replaced by specifically Russian words and structures. Translations played the dominant part in this process.<sup>63</sup> In 1952–53, Kundzich published his four-volume translation of *War and Peace* (the first two volumes had been published in 1937 in Varavva's translation; as he had now emigrated to the West, his name and works could not be mentioned, and therefore Kundzich retranslated them). Translations of works by "proletarian" writers, primarily Gorky, remained obligatory.<sup>64</sup> For example, between 1952 and 1955, sixteen volumes of Gorky's works appeared in Ukrainian. Translations of other contemporary Soviet Russian authors abounded.

## Soviet versus Anti-Soviet Translation (Late 1950s-Late 1980s)

During the early postwar years, there was a tendency to translate writers from other Soviet ethnic groups, as well as other foreign authors, only via Russian. Later any publication of texts in Ukrainian not yet extant in Russian translation was closely monitored, and Ukrainian translations were scrupulously compared with Russian versions of the originals to ensure that the latter remained

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62 Maksym Strikha, *Ukrains'kyi pereklad i perekladachi: mizh literaturoiu i natsiietvoenniam* [Ukrainian Translation and Translators: Between Literature and Nation-Building] (Kyiv: Dukh i litera, 2020), p. 246.

63 Bohdan Nahaylo and Victor Swoboda, *Soviet Disunion: A History of the Nationalities Problem in the USSR* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1990), p. 78.

64 Maksym Strikha, *Ukrains'kyi pereklad i perekladachi*, p. 261.



authoritative. The practice of 'translation from translation', almost exclusively from Russian translation, now became widespread. As Ukrainian translator and literary scholar Rostyslav Dotsenko argues, "translations from Russian have served for years as an easy 'fishing trip' for ungifted authors of local significance, who managed to produce whole piles of translated socialist-realist low-quality 'wastepaper', including even the masterworks of 'fraternal republics', mutilated by awkward translations".<sup>65</sup> Moreover, the detrimental effect of literalism in Ukraine replicated the enormous scope of translation practice in all its branches—in the press and radio, in the compilation of dictionaries and in scholarly and political publications. The intrinsic bias towards Russian literature of the ostensible Soviet 'commonwealth' of literatures clearly created a monological Russian dominance in Ukraine's cultural space, rather than fraternal dialogue.

The publication of Russian literary classics was prioritised in Ukraine: by the year 1967, almost four million copies of Pushkin's works, for example, had been published; over five million copies of Tolstoy, nearly three million copies of Gogol, and many millions of copies of books by Vladimir Korolenko, Dmitrii Mamin-Sibiriak, Nikolai Nekrasov, Saltykov-Shchedrin, and Chekhov.<sup>66</sup> Concurrently, cohorts of Soviet Ukrainian scholars developed the concept of the Russo-Ukrainian literary 'interaction', 'commonwealth', 'unity', as well as 'linguistic relations' and the 'brotherhood of cultures',<sup>67</sup> which all essentially sustained a Russian totalitarian monologue based on censorship and state control of book production.<sup>68</sup> Daniele Monticelli terms this cultural situation, where translations take a large share of book production and "only one source language and culture is absolutely hegemonic among translations" as "totalitarian translation".<sup>69</sup> Such translation is characterised by erasure of the previous national legacy through censorship and destruction of books and by repressing the living writer-translators, making their creative individuality invisible. In the USSR, translations from Russian served to fill in the blanks caused by the erasure of national memory, enabling the Communist rewriting of Ukraine's cultural heritage. However, Ukrainian translators and translation scholars of the 1950s (Kundzich, Kovhaniuk, Rylsky, Mykola Lukash, and their

65 Rostyslav Dotsenko, 'Pereklad—dlia samozbahachennia chy samoobkradannia?', pp. 105–06.

66 Viktor M. Skachkov et al., ed., *Spivdruzhnist' literatur: bibliografichnyi pokazhchyk (1917–1966)* [*The Commonwealth of Literatures: Bibliographic Index (1917–1966)*] (Kharkiv: Knyzhkova Palata UkrSSR, 1969).

67 Ibid., p. 8.

68 On the layers of the historicity of translation see Daniele Monticelli and Anne Lange, 'Translation and Totalitarianism: The Case of Soviet Estonia,' *The Translator*, 20:1 (2014), 95–111.

69 Daniele Monticelli, "'Totalitarian Translation' as a Means of Forced Cultural Change: The Case of Post-war Soviet Estonia" in *Between Cultures and Texts: Itineraries in Translation History*, ed. by Antoine Chalvin, Anne Lange, and Daniele Monticelli (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2011), pp. 187–200 (p. 190).

ilk) challenged literalism as a means of Russifying the Ukrainian language. They contributed to the rise of a dissident movement in the 1960s.<sup>70</sup> Not only the textual praxis of translation but also the paratexts, or commentaries on translations, “became a site of resistance to official Soviet culture and values”.<sup>71</sup>

In contrast to the ‘Soviet translation project’, ‘anti-Soviet’ translation also developed at that time, mainly in Ukrainian émigré literary circles.<sup>72</sup> Ukrainian translators in the West often deliberately aimed to translate authors *not* published in the USSR, including Russian and Ukrainian authors writing in Russian.<sup>73</sup> Oksana Solovey translated Russian dissident writers, including excerpts from Solzhenitsyn’s novel *The First Circle* (*V krughe pervom*, 1968) (*V koli pershomu*, 1969), short stories from Varlam Shalamov’s collection *Kolyma Stories* (*Kolymskie rasskazy*, 1978) (*Iz ‘Kolymy’kykh opovidan’*, 1972),<sup>74</sup> both appearing in the Munich Ukrainian émigré journal *Modernity* (*Suchasnist’*). Ukrainian émigré poet, prose writer, and literary scholar Igor Kaczurowsky, a prolific translator of Russian poets into Ukrainian (particularly of Silver Age poetry), also translated Solzhenitsyn’s Nobel Prize Lecture (1972)<sup>75</sup> (*Nobelivs’ka lektsiia z literatury*, 1973) and two Shalamov stories, published in the journal *Suchasnist’* in 1981.

Meanwhile, in Soviet Ukraine, classics of Russian literature continued to be retranslated and reprinted during the 1970s and 1980s, although on a smaller scale. During the period 1965–90, Soviet Russian Village Prose (*derevenshchiki*) became popular, mostly in the original language, but also in translation. In the 1980s, Fedor Abramov’s novels *The Wooden Horses* (*Dereviannye koni*, 1970; *Derev’iani koni*, 1982), and *The Swans Flew By* (*Proletali lebedi*, 1989; *Prolitaly lebedi*, 1989), as well as the collection of Abramov’s *Works* in two volumes (*Tvory: V 2 tomakh*, 1989), appeared in Ukrainian translation. Vladimir Tendriakov’s books—*A Topsy-Turvy Spring: Stories* (*Vesennie perevǔtyshi*, 1973; *Vesniani pereverty*, 1978), *Atonement: Novellas* (*Rasplata*, 1979; *Rozplata*, 1986) and *Assassinating Mirages* (*Pokushenie na mirazhi*, 1987; *Zamakh na mirazhi*, 1990)—were also published.

70 Taras Shmihor, *Istoriia Ukraïns’koho perekladoznavstva XX storichchia* [*The History of Ukrainian Translation Thought of the 20th Century*] (Kyiv: Smoloskyp, 2009).

71 Brian James Baer, ‘Literary Translation and the Construction of a Soviet Intelligentsia’, *The Massachusetts Review*, 47:3 (2006), 537–60 (p. 537).

72 The majority of the most talented Ukrainian translators in the USSR silently opposed the regime—despite declarations of political loyalty and occasional fulfilment of politicised state commissions, such as the Ukrainian version of the USSR National Anthem.

73 For example, Ivan Koshelivets’ translations of Viktor Nekrasov’s essays on America, *Both Sides of the Ocean* (*Po obe storony okeana. V Italii — v Amerike*, 1962) (*Po obydvobokh okeanu*, 1964), and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* [*Odin den’ Ivana Denisovicha*, 1962; *Odyn den’ Ivana Denysovycha*, 1963].

74 *Kolyma Stories* were translated into Ukrainian almost in parallel with foreign publications in Russian.

75 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1970. The text of his Nobel speech appeared in 1972, and once in exile he received the Nobel insignia in person in 1974.

Vasilii Shukshin's famous collection of short and movie stories *Snowball Berry Red* (*Kalina krasnaia*, 1973; *Kalyna chervona*, 1978, 1986) appeared in Ukrainian translation by the well-regarded prose writer, Hryhir Tiutiunnyk (1931–80). The best Russian novellas of the 1970s were anthologised in the translated collection *Contemporary Russian Novellas* (1983), which featured works by Viktor Astafyev, Shukshin, Valentin Rasputin, Irina Grekova, Vyacheslav Shugayev, and Iurii Trifonov. One more anthology, *Russian Soviet Stories* in two volumes (1974–75), deserves separate mention. It primarily comprised Russian authors who wrote outside the official framework of Socialist Realism and were therefore semi-disgraced (Andrei Platonov, Iurii Kazakov, Vasilii Aksenov, Sergei Zalygin, Abramov, and Shukshin, among others). The third issue (1987) of the book series 'Novels and Novellas' published monthly by the Dnipro Publishing House consisted of translations of Iurii Bondarev's novel *The Game* (*Igra*, 1985; *Hra*), Rasputin's novella *Fire* (*Pozhar*, 1985; *Pozhezha*), and Astaf'ev's novel *The Sad Detective* (*Pechal'nyi detektiv*, 1986; *Pechal'nyi detektyv*). One more contemporary strand of Russian literature popular in Ukrainian translations was 'lieutenant prose' (*leitenantskaia proza*), or Second World War 'trench truth' (*okopnaia pravda*), reflecting the reality of war experience, stripped of all bravado (such as the prose of Viktor Nekrasov, Grigorii Baklanov, and Konstantin Vorobev).

## The Market for Translated Russian Literature in Post-Soviet Ukraine

With Ukraine's independence in 1991, a new stage of cultural dialogue with Russian literature began: put more precisely, existing exchanges went on hold because of structural and economic transformations in the Ukrainian book market. During the first two post-Soviet decades, translations of modern Russian prose were extremely rare, mainly in the genre of children's literature. The publication in Ukrainian of the satirical novel *The Life and Extraordinary Adventures of Private Ivan Chonkin* (*Zhizn' i neobychnnye prikliucheniia soldata Ivana Chonkina*, 1969 Russia/1975 Paris editions) by Russian dissident writer Vladimir Voinovich (*Zhyttia i nadzvychaini pryhody soldata Ivana Chonkina*, 1992) is a happy exception to the rule—the book appeared in print in Ukrainian translation even earlier than its separate edition in Russia in 1993. As reported by UNESCO *Index Translationum*,<sup>76</sup> very few Russian authors were translated in the years from 1992 to 2010 (these included Boris Akunin and Viktor Suvorov).<sup>77</sup> Among canonical

76 UNESCO *Index Translationum*, <https://www.unesco.org/xtrans/bsresult.aspx?lg=0&sl=rus&l=ukr&c=UKR&from=1992&to=2003&fr=20>.

77 The total number of publications (forty-three titles) may be underestimated, probably due to sporadic data submission by Ukraine (2004 was the last year of data submission). However, compared to the 2,080 titles reported for the period 1979–91, the difference in the number of publications is striking.

Russian authors, Gogol maintained his appeal for Ukrainian readers, but he was regarded as a Ukrainian writer.

Oversaturation with Russian products, primarily Russian-language translations, characterised the book market in independent Ukraine in the 1990s and 2000s.<sup>78</sup> During the first twenty years of independence, the number of translations from Russian has slowly declined; since 2014, with the onset of the Russo-Ukrainian war, translations from Russian reduced sharply. And with the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, any cultural exchanges with the Russian Federation, including translation, came to a halt. In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine has removed all texts belonging to the Russian literary canon from foreign literature programmes in Ukrainian secondary and higher education institutions, a political decision that will last until the end of the war.

After the book publishing crisis of 1993, when economic and political instability distracted Ukrainian readers, Ukrainian publishers flooded the market with Russian-language translations of popular literature, targeting local readers and even Russian book markets. Thus, between 1993 and 2000, almost all translations into Ukrainian were made thanks to foreign grants (from the International Renaissance Foundation and other Western European charitable funds). This fact partly explains the growing disinterest in Ukrainian translations of Russian-language fiction or poetry. Funding, and hence the attention of book publishers, was primarily directed towards translations of the works which disseminated Western European cultural values and thus contributed to the intellectual development and formation of civil society. The Russian Federation has not funded Ukrainian translations, with very few exceptions: in 2013 the International Sholokhov Committee supported the Kyiv publishing house, Friendship of Peoples, with its new translation of Sholokhov's *And Quiet Flows the Don* within the book series 'Library of V. S. Chernomyrdin'.

It is important to note that the Ukrainian-language book market began developing separately from the Russian market at the turn of the twenty-first century, namely, in 1999, after the Russian economy defaulted.<sup>79</sup> For commercial survival, some independent Ukrainian publishing houses, which had appeared in the 1990s and specialised in translations into Russian (which they even exported to Russia), were forced to rebrand their products as Ukrainian-language translations (not neglecting covert or overt translations from

78 Kostiantyn Rodyk, *Pereklady na ukrains'ku, 1992–2012: Rezul'taty doslidzhennia perekladiv na ukrains'ku movu, opublikovanykh u period 1992–2012 roku* [Translations into Ukrainian, 1992–2012: Results of a Study of Translations into Ukrainian Published in the Period 1992–2012] (Book Platform: Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike), <http://www.bookplatform.org/en/activities/50-translations-into-ukr-en.html>.

79 Interview with Oleksandr Krasovytsky, a Ukrainian publisher, 9 July 2017, <https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-culture/2261781-oleksandr-krasovickij-ukrainskij-knigovidavec.html>.

Russian as the intermediary language) when copyright laws came into force in Russia. Meanwhile, statistics provided by Kostiantyn Rodyk demonstrate that translations from foreign languages in 1999 accounted for 28.9% of new publications in Ukraine, of which more than a third were from Russian.<sup>80</sup> A significant number of these translations were guides, horoscopes, leisure, office manuals, and children's books. In the period 2002–12, translations from Russian took second place after those from English, accounting for about 16% of all translated publications.<sup>81</sup> However, fiction is outnumbered by nonfiction texts, and mostly consists of children's works by Russian authors.

Serial editions have resumed since the early 2000s, including the 'Library of World Literature' series, which publishes Ukrainian-language translations of classic foreign works (both new versions and edited Soviet ones), but there has been no mass retranslation of Russian classics. Other publishing projects include, for example, the 2003 edition of the book *Sorochyn Fair on Nevsky Prospekt: The Ukrainian Reception of Gogol* as part of the Kyiv publishing house Fakt's series 'Text+Context'. Gogol occupies a special place in post-Soviet Ukraine, because he is perceived as a Ukrainian writer and has been among the most frequently translated writers in Ukraine from 2002 to 2012 by number of publications (thirty-three editions, overtaking Shakespeare).<sup>82</sup> Interestingly, translations of fiction by Russophone Ukrainian writers, including the spouses Maryna and Serhii Dyachenko, who worked in the science-fiction genre, have also been produced in large numbers. Impressively, between 2005 and 2017 the Dyachenkos' twenty-seven novels, more than fifteen collections of stories, and up to a dozen children's books have been translated and published separately. In the period 2017–20, the Kharkiv publishing house Folio printed a Ukrainian-language collection of the Dyachenkos' collected works in twenty-six volumes.<sup>83</sup>

For obvious reasons, the translation of Russian literature into Ukrainian has been rather limited in the 2010s, and not only due to the conflict raging during this period, or even the widespread Ukrainian-Russian bilingualism in Ukraine.<sup>84</sup> With the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war in February 2014—as a consequence of the Euromaidan protests and the Revolution of Dignity, as well as Russia's annexation of Crimea, inciting and sponsoring the military conflict in Donbas—and Ukraine's subsequent restrictions on the "shared informational space", i.e., a ban on certain Russian Internet resources and sites, Russian-to-Ukrainian translation has drastically changed, although it has not disappeared completely. It became clear that the book market is not only a component of the

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80 Rodyk, *Pereklady na ukrains'ku*, p. 13.

81 Ibid., p. 21.

82 Ibid., p. 22.

83 For more on English-language translations of Russophone Ukrainian authors, see Catherine O'Neil's article in this volume.

84 Despite the fact of numerous self-translations in both directions and covert translations from Russian as a relay language.



country's outward-facing market system, but also interwoven with its cultural integrity. The tendency towards political and cultural dissociation from the 'Russian world', accompanied by reorientation from 'East' (Russia) to the 'West' (the Euro-Atlantic cultural space), as expressed in the slogan 'Ukraine is Europe', has been normalised in Ukraine since Russia annexed Crimea and launched hostilities in the Donbas. Unlike the Soviet past, contemporary Ukraine has no writer-translators translating and/or retranslating Russian authors on a large scale. Their absence can be explained by the growing desire for distantiation from Russian political hegemony: "For writers from countries that have long been under colonial domination, [...] bilingualism (defined as 'embodied' translation) is the primary and indelible mark of political domination".<sup>85</sup> In the wake of rising patriotic sentiment in Ukraine, demand for books in the Ukrainian language (including translated editions) has increased, but this trend does not apply to translations from the classical Russian authors.

During the 2010s, multicultural dialogue emerged in the field of Ukrainian literary translation, based on translations of the works by contemporary Russophone authors from the former Soviet republics. The best-known of these include Svetlana Alexievich (from Belarus) and her books *Chernobyl Prayer* (*Chernobyl'skaia molitva*, 1997), translated by the prominent writer and public intellectual Zabuzhko (*Chornobyl: khronika maibutnioho*, 1998) and *The Unwomanly Face of War* (*U voiny ne zhenskoe litso*, 1985), translated by acclaimed writer Volodymyr Rafeyenko in 2016 (*U viiny ne zhinoche oblychchia*), among other titles. The Armenian artist and writer Mariam Petrosyan's famous novel, *The Gray House* (*Dom, v kotorom*, 2009) was translated by the prize-winning Ukrainian poet and author Marianna Kiyanovska (*Dim, v yakomu*) in 2019. The Georgian journalist and writer Oleg Panfilov is represented in Ukrainian translation by his books *Anti-Soviet Stories* (*Antisovetskie istorii*, 2016; *Antyradianski istorii*, 2016), *A Conversation with a Vatnik* (*Razgovor s vatnikom*, 2017; *Rozмова z "vatnykom"*, 2017), and other texts. Since hostilities began, only those contemporary Russian writers who openly condemn the Kremlin's policy towards Ukraine (such as Liudmila Ulitskaia, Boris Akunin, Viktor Erofeev) or who parody Putin's regime (Vladimir Sorokin) have been translated. For example, translations of Sorokin's satirical novels *Day of the Oprichnik* (*Den' oprichnika*, 2006) and *Sugar Kremlin* (*Sakharnyi kremli'*, 2008) (*Tsukrovyi Kremli'*) were both published as separate editions by Folio (Kharkiv, 2010) in translation by Sashko Ushkalov.

Since 1 January 2017, a new law has impeded the import into Ukraine of Russian books, including translations into Russian published in the Russian Federation.<sup>86</sup> On 30 March 2021, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted a

85 Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, p. 258.

86 In December 2016, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine adopted the Law 'On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Concerning Restrictions on Access to the Ukrainian Market of Foreign Printed Products of Anti- Ukrainian Content', which came into force on 1 January 2017. This law introduced a procedure limiting

resolution on the escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, which officially recognised that Ukraine was at war with the Russian Federation—an aggressor country.<sup>87</sup> Arguably, intra-national translation now prevails in the current field of Russian-to-Ukrainian translation, where ‘intra-national’ refers to Russophone Ukrainian writers. These writers identify themselves as Ukrainian authors writing in Russian, with a pro-Ukrainian worldview and a sense of patriotism towards the Ukrainian state. They are unafraid to ‘Ukrainianise’ their Russian lexis. For the most part, Russophone Ukrainian authors produce commercially successful genre literature, such as detective stories (Andrii Kurkov, Iryna Lobusova), science fiction (Maryna and Serhii Dyachenko, Andrii Valentynov, Yan Valetov, Volodymyr Vasylyev, H. L. Oldie—the pen name of science fiction and fantasy writers Dmytro Hromov and Oleh Ladyzhenskyy), mysticism (Lada Luzina), and drama (Natalia Vorozhbyt). Twenty detective novels by Kurkov, for example, have already been translated into Ukrainian. Some authors who previously wrote in Russian have now switched to Ukrainian (Kurkov, Rafeenko, Vorozhbyt, and others).

## Conclusion

A sharp decline in the number of translations from Russian literature since the Revolution of Dignity, the Maidan Revolution (February 2014), and the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war testifies to the Ukrainian culture’s resistance to the expansion of hegemonic Russian culture. As the prominent Ukrainian dissident writer Ivan Dziuba notes, the history of Ukrainian culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries shows that its interaction with Russian literature and culture was two-sided. One side is receptive to the humanistic and aesthetic impulses of Russian culture, while the other reacts defensively, by developing its own alternative cultural space.<sup>88</sup>

Translations of canonical Russian literature during Ukraine’s National Renaissance period (from the 1920s to the early 1930s) corresponded to the

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the importation of printed matter from Russia to Ukraine: Russian-produced publications could legally enter Ukraine only after assessment by the expert council of the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting.

- 87 “Russia, as a party to the international armed conflict, must recognize its responsibility for unleashing armed aggression against Ukraine and make every effort to resolve the conflict” (from the ‘Resolution on the Escalation of the Russo-Ukrainian Armed Conflict’, adopted by the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on 30 March 2021), <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1356-20#Text>.
- 88 Ivan Dziuba, ‘Ukraina–Rosii: Protystoiannia chy dialoh kul’tur?’ [‘Ukraine–Russia: Confrontation or Dialogue of Cultures?’] In *Ukraina–Rosii: kontseptual’ni osnovy humanitarnykh vidnosyn* [Ukraine–Russia: Conceptual Foundations of Humanitarian Relations], ed. by Oleh P. Lanovenko (Kyiv: Stylos, 2001), esp. Chapter Five, pp. 265–333.

receptive view of Russian culture. From the mid-1930s to the mid-1950s, and again from 1972 until the late 1980s, Ukrainian culture and its national figures were repressed and translation from Russian was a strategy employed in the Russification of Ukrainian culture. Ukrainian translators have tried to oppose this function of Russian-to-Ukrainian translations throughout Ukraine's shared history with Russia: both as part of the Russian Empire (the first translations into Ukrainian appeared in the nineteenth century) and later as part of the Soviet Union. The national function of Ukrainian translation—to protect the Ukrainian language and culture despite externally imposed bans and repressions—always opposed Russification. While Russian culture has mostly been perceived by Ukrainians as the culture of an ethnically and linguistically related people, it also represents, today more than ever, an imperial and destructive force with a clear political goal. According to Dziuba's vision, the dominance of Russian culture in Ukraine will naturally decrease, thanks to the growing potential and influence of Ukrainian national culture in society, and due to the growing assimilation of global culture by Ukraine itself.<sup>89</sup>

From 24 February 2022, the barbaric actions of Putin's Russia became visible to everyone and broke the natural course of events for the distancing of Ukrainian culture from Russian, as predicted by Dziuba. All cultural ties had to be interrupted after the revelation of such atrocities as the Bucha massacre. Today, most Ukrainian writers and leaders of public opinion consider Russian literature complicit in the crimes of Russians in Ukraine. As Zabuzhko writes in her denunciatory essay, "it barely needs pointing out that Putin's offensive on 24 February owed much to Dostoevskyism".<sup>90</sup> She views and understands the invasion through this prism: "literature is of one flesh with the society for which and about which it writes".<sup>91</sup> Therefore, according to some Ukrainian humanitarian thinkers, literature is also responsible for infusing those who have committed war crimes in Ukraine with a feeling of absolute impunity and long-suppressed hatred and envy ('Why should you live better than us?' is the challenge apparently being voiced by some Russian soldiers to Ukrainians).<sup>92</sup> Total rejection and condemnation of Russian literary production is now, for many Ukrainian writers and critics, not just an aesthetic choice in a long-running struggle for cultural identity, but an existential necessity. Before the 2014 and 2022 invasions, much of the world did not notice that the landscape of Russian culture was predominantly imperial, or that Russian cultural heritage, with its canon of 'classical Russian literature', was sometimes absorbed or co-opted from other nations (mostly Ukraine), or complicit in spreading an imperialist, often racist and militarist, mythos (this applies even to iconic figures like Pushkin, Dostoevsky, and Tolstoy). As one recent *Economist* journalist has clarified for

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89 Ibid.

90 Oksana Zabuzhko, 'No Guilty People in the World?.'

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

outside observers: “For Ukrainians, the stakes are higher. The Kremlin denies the existence of a discrete Ukrainian history and identity. That makes culture a matter of survival.”<sup>93</sup> A nation’s culture is not only about entertainment; it embraces its values and identity. Culture has no right to remain silent. Sadly, ‘Russian culture’, except for certain isolated voices, has been silent on its politicians’ treatment of Ukraine.

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93 ‘Why an American Novel Set in Russia Was Pulled from Publication’, *The Economist*, 26 June 2023, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2023/06/26/why-an-american-novel-set-in-russia-was-pulled-from-publication>.

